# Division of Community Colleges and Workforce Preparation Iowa Department of Education Grimes State Office Building Des Moines, IA 50319

## GUIDELINES FOR PROGRAM AWARDS IN IOWA'S COMMUNITY COLLEGES

#### AAS and AAA Degree Programs

- 1. Associate degree programs designed primarily for immediate employment shall be designated as Associate in Applied Science (AAS) or Associate in Applied Arts (AAA) degree programs.
- 2. The AAS and AAA degrees shall be identified with a specialty or a field of study designation.
- 3. AAS and AAA degree programs shall be responsive to the employment needs of business, industry, public agencies, military, and entrepreneurship.
- 4. All components of AAS and AAA degree requirements should be outcome oriented. While not all of the course and program outcomes can easily be measured, there remains a responsibility to define the knowledge, skills, and attitudes students are expected to attain. It is expected that this outcome orientation should apply to all components of the degree.
- 5. AAS and AAA degree requirements shall consist of a minimum of 60 semester credit hours or 90 quarter hours. Programs shall not exceed an average of 19 credit hours per term (28.5 quarter hours), and shall not exceed 86 semester credit hours (129 quarter hours). Program length shall not exceed four regular terms and two summer terms. Each summer term may have two (2) sessions. All college-level courses required for program admittance and/or graduation must be included in the 86 credit hour maximum). Remedial and developmental work shall be in addition to the collegiate level requirements of the degrees.
- 6. The general education component of AAS and AAA degree programs shall constitute a minimum of 12 semester hours of credit (18 quarter hours). The general education component shall include at least one course from each of the following: Communications, social science and/or humanities, and mathematics and/or science. General education addresses the ability to reason, think, compute, communicate, and adapt to change. It also includes human development in civic, consumer, environmental, and social responsibilities. The individual institution shall determine applicable coursework in general education insofar as that coursework conforms to the definitions as cited in this document.
- 7. The technical specialty component of the AAS and AAA degrees shall constitute a minimum of 50% of the course credits.
- 8. Although open admission to the institution is a cardinal characteristic of most community colleges, minimum criteria for admission to AAS and AAA degree programs are essential and should be defined for each program.
- 9. AAS and AAA degree programs shall be supported by student services designed systematically for the needs of career-oriented students.

- 10. A curriculum structure with multiple exit-re-entry points should be considered for AAS and AAA degrees whenever possible. One such common "building block" approach is a series of certificates which represent flexible components for the AAS and AAA degree programs that may eventually be converted into the full degree.
- 11. Credit toward the AAS and AAA degree should be awarded for knowledge and skills acquired through prior experiences.
- 12. AAS and AAA degree curricula articulation with appropriate secondary schools is encouraged.
- 13. AAS and AAA degree curricula articulation with four-year institutions through the cooperative planning and implementation of transfer agreements, including two + two curricula is encouraged.
- 14. In the interest of students attaining their individual career goals in their vocational- technical programming, Iowa's public community colleges are committed to cooperate in transferring applicable and appropriate coursework to facilitate student success.

## **Diploma Programs**

A program awarding a diploma shall consist of a minimum of 15 semester hours (22) quarter hours) with the general education component consisting of a minimum of 3 semester hours (4 quarter hours) from any of the following: Communications, social science and/or humanities, and mathematics and/or science. Diploma programs shall not exceed 48 semester credit hours (72 quarter hours) in length. Minimum criteria for admission to diploma programs are essential and should be defined by each institution.

#### **Certificate Programs**

A certificate of completion may be issued to a student who has satisfactorily completed a course of study prescribed by the institution other than one that is intended to result in the awarding of a diploma or degree. Certificate programs shall be less than 48 semester credit hours (72 quarter hours) in length.

### State Board Approval

The State Board of Education shall approve all AAS and AAA degree programs; the marketing of parts of credit programs (i.e., certificates, diplomas, 22 or more semester credit hours not separately approved by the State Board) must be within the AAS or AAA degree program. Individual state board approved certificate and diploma programs 22 or more semester credit hours in length may be marketed separately. The above does not include the marketing of Adult and Continuing Education non-credit programs and courses.

### ADDENDUM RELATED TO COURSES IN PROGRAM MAXIMUM CREDIT HOURS

## Required in program credit hours

When the level of competency needed for a program requires that students complete a college credit course, this course <u>must</u> be included in the total program credit hours (example: SC1Ol Human Physiology or equivalent needed for completion of the program.)

### Not required in program credit hours

When the level of competencies can be acquired in high school or outside of college credit they can be designated as a entry requirement for program admission. If a student does not have the competencies, strategies may be identified to correct the deficiency. If a college course is the route chosen to obtain the competencies, the course would <u>not</u> be a part of the total program credit hours, because it is a student deficiency rather than a program requirement. (Example: Basic Chemistry competencies needed for required college level science course in the program. The competencies level required is less than a college credit chemistry course.)